

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Linda Harris, and I am a resident of Manchester and member of Uniting for a Safe Inclusive Community - Manchester.

I stand in support of S.B. 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the health care we all need and deserve. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

Children require routine preventive medical care after they reach the age of nine years. Preventive care also is required for adults. Illness requiring medical intervention occurs to most individuals irrespective of immigration status. Many immigrant families consciously weigh if they should seek medical care for them and their children due to the additional bill they will incur. Some rely on home remedies or delay medical care until the situation is dire. Many families are fearful of seeking medical intervention due to how they will be perceived and concerned for the personal safety of the family. These concerns are compounded by the knowledge that they will receive a medical bill they cannot afford and prescriptions that they might have to prioritize over food or other essential basic living expenses or cannot purchase due to the cost.

I was involved in a conversation with a mother recently who stated that although her children are on HUSKY due to their legal status; she was informed she is not eligible for five years due to hers. She stated that she prays she does not get sick because she must work every day to support her family and without insurance, she will not seek medical care. This mother is a health caregiver, an essential worker, who is responsible for providing care for high-risk patients. This mother like so many undocumented parents and caregivers are on the frontline of this pandemic with the same concerns of possible infection and transmission to their families without the assurance that they can access medical care without incurring a bill they know they cannot pay.

I strongly support S.B.284 and urge you to pass this legislation. Health care for all eligible children independent of their immigration status in this country should be guaranteed. I look forward to the committee's work to expand access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time.

Linda M. Harris